

Grace Episcopal Cathedral
(Trinity Episcopal Cathedral)
1121 Main Street
Davenport
Scott County
Iowa

HABS No. IA-114

HABS
IOWA
82-DAVPO,
4-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

ADDENDUM
FOLLOWS...

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

GRACE EPISCOPAL CATHEDRAL
(TRINITY EPISCOPAL CATHEDRAL)

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Location: 1121 Main St., Davenport, Scott County, Iowa

Statement of Significance: The cathedral is of importance as a characteristic example of the High Victorian Gothic style of architecture in the United States and as an example of the work of Edward Tuckerman Potter, a New York architect whose work in this style was significant.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Physical History

1. Dates of erection: Excavation begun early in 1867 (14, p. 15). 27 June 1867, cornerstone laid (16, p. 241). 18 June 1873, consecrated (16, p. 241).
2. Architect: Edward Tuckerman Potter, 56 Wall Street, New York, N.Y. (6; 16, p. 241). D. W. Clark, assistant architect (14, p. 20).
3. Original and subsequent owners:

Legal description: All of Outlot 13 in Le Claire's Second Addition to the city of Davenport, except the south 150 feet of said outlot.

1877 Trust Deed. 26 June 1877, recorded 25 July 1877 in

Lot Deeds Book 36, p. 407

Trustees of Griswold College

to

Right Reverend William Stevens Perry and his successors, Bishop of Iowa.

In trust for the benefit of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Iowa, for cathedral purposes.

Whenever the lot shall cease to be used for cathedral purposes it must be reconveyed to the Trustees of Griswold College or their successors. It is noted that "a church building to be used for cathedral purposes" has been erected. The college is not permitted to sell the land without the consent of the Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church of Iowa and of the Bishop. For \$1.00.

4. Builders or suppliers: Superintendent, E. W. Baker.
Foundations contractor, William Swindle (14, p. 20).
5. Original plan and construction: In the Thirteenth Annual Convention of the Diocese of Iowa a resolution was adopted stating that since the Board of Trustees of Griswold College had consented to give sufficient land on the college grounds for the erection of a Bishop's Church "whenever it shall be desired", the convention concurred in the action on condition that the land be held by the Bishop and his successors in trust for the purposes aforementioned. In his annual address, the Bishop, Henry Washington Lee, D. D., requested church legislation for a Bishop's Church "canonically organized as a parochial

charge, with a Vestry and a Conventional representation", because Bishop Lee felt that such a church should not interfere with the Bishop's diocesan duties (10, 30 May 1866, pp. 11, 13, 29).

Griswold College had been bought personally by Bishop Lee in 1859. The property included two city blocks formerly occupied by Iowa College, which had moved to Grinnell, Iowa. Subsequently a college corporation was organized, and the college was renamed in honor of the late Presiding Bishop Griswold (13, p. 296).

According to Mary Lou Phelan, the excavations for the building were begun early in 1867 (14, p. 5). G. W. Shinn gives the following information about the building. The cornerstone was laid on 27 June 1867. The building dimensions were given as 142 feet long, 60 feet wide [the nave width], and 56 feet in "height to the top of the stone roof". The walls were of gray native limestone faced with a yellowish limestone from Joliet, Illinois. The interior columns were of iron, "from which spring the arching timbers supporting the high open roof". (The columns as built are wood, at least in their exposed surfaces, although the forms of iron columns are shown on the working drawings, although not called out as such). The windows were of stained glass, including a circular window at the west end commemorating Jackson Kemper, the first missionary bishop. The interior woodwork was butternut. Only the base of the tower was built; the rest was to be

built later. The total cost of the building was given as \$75,000, of which \$25,000 was contributed by John David Wolfe and his daughter Miss Catherine Lorillard Wolfe of New York, and \$15,000 by David J. Ely of Chicago and New York (16, pp. 241, 242, 243). Phelan gives the total cost as \$80,000, and notes that Bishop Lee contributed \$2,500 of his own money, for which Bishop Potter of New York reimbursed him (14, p. 23).

6. Known alterations and additions: A tower 126 feet high appears in the working drawings, shown south of the chancel, but was never built (6).

In 1883 estimates were taken on adopting the cathedral basement for use of the Sunday School (3, p. 33).

In 1899 electric lights were installed in the cathedral as a gift of a member of the congregation, although other members felt that the gas lighting which was replaced was satisfactory. There was some confusion in billing, owing to a change in ownership in the power company (1, 2).

The present name of the cathedral derives from the uniting of the two parishes of Trinity Church and Grace Cathedral on 26 Dec. 1909. Trinity Parish had been the first Episcopal parish in Davenport. For this reason it was decided to perpetuate the name of Trinity in that of both the cathedral and of the new combined parish (14, pp. 31, 32; 5, pp. 257, 259).

In 1917 the Cook Memorial Parish House was added to the north of the cathedral and connected to it by an enclosed arcade (14, p. 34).

Historical Events and Persons Associated with the Building
Edward Tuckerman Potter.

Henry-Russell Hitchcock describes Potter as an American architect who was producing High Victorian Gothic architecture of a type that was most characteristic of the United States during the ten-year period from 1865 to 1875 when this style was most popular. He also notes that Potter is responsible for the design of what was probably the first High Victorian Gothic building to be built in the U.S., the Nott Memorial Library at Union College, Schenectady, N.Y., of the 1850s, and one of the few buildings built in the style before 1865 (12, pp. 191, 192).

Potter was born in 1831 (12, p. 191). His father was Alonzo Potter, Episcopal Bishop of Pennsylvania and former president of Union College, Schenectady, N.Y. (17, p. 484; 16, p. 32). He studied architecture in the office of Richard M. Upjohn, the well known Gothic Revival architect (16, p. 484; 12, p. 191). In writing Potter's obituary in 1909, Montgomery Schuyler describes Potter as "one of the athletes of the Gothic revival, and one of those who did most to make even the 'Victorian' phase of that revival rational and acceptable". Later in his life Potter inherited enough money so that he no longer needed to practice architecture as a means of livelihood, a circumstance which Schuyler believed prevented Potter's coming to "the maturity of his powers" (15, pp. 176-177).

Although the reason why the architectural commission for the cathedral was given to Potter is not explicitly known, it seems most likely that his family connections with the church hierarchy and the architectural profession were one instrumental factor. His father, Alonzo Potter, was Bishop of Pennsylvania, one of his brothers was Bishop of New York, and another, William C., was an architect who was, in the late 1870s, Supervising Architect under the U.S. Treasury Department. Bishop Lee had been rector of St. Luke's Church in Rochester, New York, before coming to Iowa in 1855 (16, p. 241; II, Vol. I, pp. 585, 590; 17, p. 485). Another factor in Potter's receiving the commission may have been the fact that a large portion of the funds for building the cathedral were contributed by members of Grace Church, New York. Potter's office was in that city and he may have been known and recommended by parishioners of Grace Church (10, 26-28 May 1874, p. 18).

Henry Washington Lee.

Bishop Lee was the first Episcopal Bishop of Iowa. He was born in Connecticut in 1815 and was rector of St. Luke's Church in Rochester, N.Y., at the time he was elected Bishop of Iowa in 1854. He assumed his duties in 1855. He was a successful fund raiser, working in the wealthier eastern parishes to obtain donations for his episcopate. While in Rochester he had earned two D. D. degrees, and in 1867 received the LL. D. from the University of Cambridge, England. He died in 1874, one year after the consecration of his cathedral (13, pp. 291-294, 302).

Sources of Information

Primary and unpublished sources.

- (1) Letter from Clerk of the Parish of Grace Cathedral to Davenport Gas and Electric Co., 3 April 1900.
- (2) Letter from Hamilton Schuyler, 15 Gramercy Park, N.Y., to Mr. Van Patten, 11 Nov. 1899.
- (3) Grace Cathedral (Davenport, Iowa). Reports of "Meeting of Trustees of the Cathedral Congregation", April 1883.
- (4) Scott County, Iowa. Lot Deeds Book, Vol. 36.
- (5) Trinity Church (Davenport Iowa). "Trinity Parish Vestry Minutes, 1867-1910".
- (6) Working drawings. "Diocesan Church, Davenport, Iowa". E. T. Potter, Architect, 56 Wall St., N.Y. Blueprints, Sheets No. 1-3, 5-14 (sheet No. 4 is missing). In possession of Trinity Cathedral.

Secondary and published sources:

- (10) Diocese of Iowa. Convention Journals 1866-1876.
- (11) Downer, Harry E. History of Davenport and Scott Counties, Iowa. 2 Vols.; Chicago, 1910.
- (12) Hitchcock, Henry-Russell. Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. Baltimore, 1958.
- (13) Judd, Francis E. "Establishment of the Diocese of Iowa, Protestant Episcopal Church of America". Annals of Iowa, 3rd series, XI (Jan. 1914), 291-303.
- (14) Phelan, Mary Kay. "Heritage of a Dream". Centennial pamphlet, 1967.

- (15) Schuyler, Montgomery. "The Work of William Appleton Potter". Architectural Record, XXVI (Sept. 1909): 176-196.
- (16) Shinn, George Wolfe, D.D. King's Handbook of Notable Episcopal Churches in the United States. Boston, 1889.
- (17) Withey, Henry F., and Withey, Elsie Rathburn. Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased). Los Angeles, California 1956.

ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

Condition of Fabric

Excellent

Detailed Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: from the work drawings, 135 feet long by 82 feet wide.
2. Number of bays: the length of the nave has four bays plus the chancel. The width of the nave has three bays.
3. Number of stories: one.
4. Layout, shape: three-aisled basilica with chancel and semicircular apse. Vestry at north side of chancel and vestibule at south side of chancel.
5. Foundations: exterior face same as walls. A water table caps the foundation.
6. Wall construction, finish, color: rock faced, broken ashlar limestone. Size of stone varies from 4" x 4" to 16" x 24". Color ranges from white to tan. Trim at openings, etc., is smooth faced and similar in color to the walls.

7. Structural system, framing: masonry bearing walls with stone buttresses at nave column lines. The interior has a stone bearing wall at the triumphal arch. Interior columns are wood (on their outer faces for certain) and over the center aisle of the nave they support a system of wooden arches that depict the shapes of Gothic nave, transverse, and rib arches as would have been built in stone, but here form a delicate pattern made up of laminated wooden members (see interior description).
8. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: none.
9. Chimney: none now, and none showing on the working drawings.
10. Doorways and doors: the doorway arches are pointed. The main entrance arch is in four orders with columns supporting the middle two orders. The door here is wood, double, and has a fixed transom. Neither the door nor the transom is paneled. The arches of the smaller doorways have two orders and no columns. The doors are similar to the main entrance door, but have one leaf only. The exteriors of the doors are painted the traditional bright red.
11. Windows: the rose window at the west end is in two orders. It has stone tracery. Above it is a small rounded-triangular window with stone tracery. At each bay of the nave are triangular dormers on the east and west slopes of the roof. At the juncture of nave and aisle roofs there is a band of windows forming a clearstory of only about one foot in height. At the chancel and apse roof there is a

similar low clearstory band at a slightly higher level than in the nave. In these clearstory bands and the dormers, tracery patterns are used. The remaining windows, except at the cellar, are pointed-arch windows of a single order. Except at the cellar, all glass is stained glass in red, blue, gold, and translucent white.

12. Roof shape, covering: the roof is gabled with approximate pitches of 60 degrees at the nave and chancel and 30 degrees at the side aisles. At the gables the end walls follow the shape of the roof but are raised slightly above it. The roofing is dark gray over the central aisle and the chancel, apparently mineral surfaced composition shingles. Over the rest of the church the roofing is a lighter gray color, apparently of the same material. Along the ridge lines is a decorative iron cresting. The points of the gables carry stone finials.
13. Cornice, eaves: simple stone cornice with widely spaced dentils.
14. Dormers, cupolas, towers: dormers, triangular in shape, at nave roof, one per bay. Turret at southwest corner of what was intend to be the tower base south of the chancel. Turret is wood-framed and contains a bell.

Detailed Description of Interior

1. Floor plan. Three-aisled basilica plan with a chancel having a semi-circular apse. There is a vestry at the north side of the chancel and a vestibule and base for a tower at the south side of the chancel. Small narthex and balcony above it.

2. Stairways: open circular stairway to organ loft over narthex. Straight stairway from narthex to basement.
3. Flooring: in narthex, dull red material resembling slate, 5" x 10" pieces. In the main spaces of the church, wooden boards approximately 3 inches wide, carpeted at the aisles.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: plaster painted white, except at the chancel and apse ceilings, where it is painted terra cotta color and stenciled with gold designs and other decorations. At the aisle walls there is a black-painted vertical board wainscot with a cresting decoration topping it. There is a similar but higher wainscot at chancel and apse that appears to be of walnut.
5. Doorways and doors: pointed arch in form.
6. Special decorative features: columns and arched supports of the roof, roof beams, and purlins are of wood with a dark finish showing the grain and are accented with vermilion. The arched members are of laminated wood with the laminations held together by means of series of bolts with star-shaped heads and nuts painted gold.
7. Notable hardware: elaborate floral ornament on exterior main doors. Elaborate floral brass plates and double-lever door handles. Pointed hinges. The lectern is an eagle on a pedestal, all brass.
8. Mechanical equipment: typical suspended lantern type of electrical fixtures in nave arcade. Heating through floor registers in the pew area. Organ in sunken pit in

front of the pulpit with organ pipes concealed at either side of the chancel.

Site and Surroundings

1. General siting: Located midway in the block bounded by Main St. on the east, 11th St. on the south, Brady St. on the west, and 12th St. on the north. The main entrance faces east. The building has a broad lawn on the west and on the east. Main Street has an old business district. Large residences border the other three sides of the site. There is an excellent High Victorian house on the corner northwest of the cathedral.
2. Historic landscape design: Not known.
3. Outbuildings: The parish house is connected by means of an enclosed arcade to the north side of the church near the east end.

Site survey by W. I. Shank, 16 Sept. 1971, and David A. Peterson, 31 March 1972.

Prepared by Wesley I. Shank
Iowa State University 1972

Edited for HABS by Druscilla J. Null 1983

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